

Editorial

Does one have to be a believer in order to engage in academic theology? It may well be that one does not need to belong to a community of religious people, and/or adhere to a particular system of religious teachings, in order to objectively study religion in general or specific religious phenomena. However, I doubt whether one can study Christian theology in a truly meaningful way, if one has not, at least to some extent, experienced the impact of this theology in one's own life. Karl Barth was of the opinion that the theological method is best described as the *lex orandi et lex credendi* (the law of prayer and of believing). In other words: Spirituality and theology cannot be separated.

Spirituality is a more encompassing sphere than theology. In a fascinating article about the relationship between theology and spirituality, Sandra M. Schneiders, associate professor of New Testament and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology/Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA), defines the spiritual life as "the whole of human experience within the horizon of ultimate concern." Theology is the most important, but not the only, discipline that is "important to the understanding and to the living of Christian religious experience."¹

This issue of *Spes Christiana* is dedicated to the topic of Christian Spirituality. The authors proceed with the presupposition that Christian doctrine must always be accompanied by Christian praxis and that, therefore, theology and spirituality are inseparably intertwined. Without being anchored in Christian truth, spirituality loses its bearings and remains stuck in feelings and emotions (at best), or in unhealthy fantasy and illusion (at worst). And, without a lived experience (i. e. spirituality), theology remains a dead letter that may endanger our inner balance rather than produce a sense of human purpose and wholeness.

The fundamental conviction that theology and spirituality belong together is reflected in the content of this issue. It contains four substantial articles that deal with topics related to our general theme of spirituality. However, the first and the final article (before the section with book reviews) are of a different nature. Even though it is clear from these two articles that they have been

¹ Schneiders, Sandra M. "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners." *Horizons* 13.2, 1986, 253–274: quotes on p. 271.

written by competent scholars, they are of a thoroughly personal nature. Dr. Mike Pearson, a professor emeritus of Newbold College, has spent his entire working life teaching ethics and related subjects. In the opening article of this issue of *Spes Christiana* he describes his spiritual journey as an individual, but also how he has benefited spiritually from being part of a church community. He ends his remarkable spiritual travel log by emphasizing that he did not want his church to “wall” him “into an institutional understanding of God. What I believe and am,” Pearson states, “must stand the test of the public space and of my own integrity.”

The last article, by Dr. Andreas Bochmann, a professor of counselling at Friedensau Adventist University, is also of a very personal nature. It is the text of a lecture Bochmann delivered in January 2020 during a professional meeting at his institution. It focused on the question whether the use of spiritual categories in the context of musical therapy and, especially, in the setting of pastoral counselling, is permitted or must be considered as a form of malpractice. Bochmann zooms in on his own experience as a pastor and as a professional counsellor, and describes how he has tried to give spirituality a legitimate place in his counselling praxis.

Philip Nern, who currently is a M. A. student of theology at Friedensau Adventist University, wrote an important contribution about spirituality. Using the so-called *Relational Models Theory*, he analyses the relationship between man and God. This model was first developed by Alan Page Fiske, an anthropologist, who suggested that human activities are structured in accordance with four distinct models which guide human thought and behaviour in all domains of life. Nern’s article shows how these four models may also apply to the sphere of spirituality.

Dr. Peter Roennfeldt is an author and scholar, as well as a life-long practitioner, in the field of church growth. His home is now in Australia, but he has worked in various parts of the world, including many years in Europe. In this article he draws on his wide experience and his academic background, particularly on the dissertation for his Doctor of Ministry Degree (2013). “Emerging church” is a somewhat pejorative term in many Adventist circles. Roennfeldt analyses the “emergence” and development of the Emerging Church model and the Adventist response to this phenomenon.

As the editor of this journal, I have also contributed an article. My piece about Adventism, Postmodernity and Spirituality, echoes the interest I have

had, for the last three decades, in the influence of postmodern thinking on the Seventh-day Adventist Church as an institution, and on large numbers of Adventists individually, especially in the Western world. I describe some of the tensions that have arisen because of the postmodern rejection of many features of institutional religion, and the institutional suspicion toward postmodern expressions of spirituality.

Dr. Laurence Turner, a gifted emeritus Old Testament scholar, taught at Newbold College before retiring a few years ago. In his article he takes the reader to the rather controversial biblical narratives of Abigail, and the medium of Endor (1 Samuel 25 and 28). The two sections share, Turner believes, “many common thematic and linguistic details, which invite an intratextual comparison of the two narratives.” Turner points to the different scholarly approaches to the narrative concerning the role and actions of the medium.

I hope that the reader of this issue of our journal will enjoy its spiritual-theological mix. The fact that two of the articles are in German rather than in English may present a challenge for some, but I trust that those who are not fully conversant with the German language will find the technological tools to provide them with a translation. Alternatively, we can provide an English translation on request.

As has now become our tradition, we have included a number of book reviews which touch on topics that many of our readers will find relevant. Suggestions for future book reviews may be sent to Dr. Kerstin Maiwald, who is responsible for this part of *Spes Christiana*.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that our journal is a team product. In this context, special thanks to Jonquil Hole (English copy editing: articles), Dr. Laurence Turner (English copy editing: book reviews), Eudritch Jean (French translation of abstracts), Dr. Tom de Bruin (DOI assignments and upload), Prof. Stefan Höschele (consultation and managing of the print issue), our peer-reviewers, the editorial board members, and our authors.

I look forward to receiving manuscripts for our future issues. For the guidelines for the writing of articles as well as book reviews, see the website of the EASTRS (European Adventist Society of Theology and Religious Studies): <https://www.eastrs.org/spes-christiana>.

Reinder Bruinsma, General Editor

